

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Review Item:

Update on Kentucky School for the Blind and the Kentucky School for the Deaf

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

KRS 167.015

History/Background:

Existing Policy. As prescribed in KRS 167.015, the Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) in Louisville and the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) in Danville are managed and controlled by the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE). The KBE has authorized the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to oversee KSB and KSD. The schools are considered divisions within KDE.

The current administrative structure at each of the schools includes a principal, campus manager, outreach director and other supervisors. At the KDE, a director and a collaborative team are responsible for on-going and daily oversight of the two schools. The schools and the collaborative team are directly under the supervision of the Associate Commissioner for the Office of Special Instructional Services within KDE. In addition to being schools that provide full-time educational services to students from across the state who are deaf/hard of hearing or blind/visually impaired, KSB and KSD also serve as statewide educational resources to schools and districts. They provide consultation, technical assistance, evaluations, resources and other services to districts, parents, students and other agencies or organizations that serve these populations of students. Currently, approximately 80% of students with sensory loss are served in local school districts.

Even though the KBE has had oversight responsibility for the two schools for many years, beginning in the late 1990s, the Board focused more attention on the two schools to ensure the students performed commensurate with the expectations of the KBE and the KDE. In the 1998-99 school year curriculum audits and assessment reviews were conducted. In subsequent school years, KDE personnel provided training and technical assistance and a highly skilled educator was assigned to the schools based on scholastic reviews conducted at each school.

In October 2001, the KDE created the KSB/KSD Oversight Committee to support the schools. After collecting more data on the performance of the students and other needs of the schools, the KBE decided an external study of fiscal, facility and program structures at both schools was needed as well as a review of services statewide for these students. The American Institutes of Research (AIR) from Palo Alto, California was selected to conduct this review. This report was

presented to the KBE at the December 2001 Board meeting. A brief summary of the major recommendations from the 100+ page report was that KDE and the schools:

1. Improve early identification and intervention for blind/visually impaired and deaf/hard of hearing students;
2. Promote and support more family involvement and family education;
3. Extend high quality local options for educational services through educational cooperatives;
4. Increase KSB and KSD's roles as statewide resources;
5. Establish a clearer philosophy of the service and purpose of the schools;
6. Develop more specialized services for students with complex needs including students who are deaf/blind;
7. Address the shortage of service providers for these populations;
8. Invest more in technology and career and technical education; and
9. Set up an appropriate administrative support structure for all blind/visually impaired and deaf/hard of hearing students across the state.

Since the report was presented KDE, KSB and KSD staff have been working to implement the recommendations of the report and to improve student performance. There have been regular presentations to the KBE on the status of the two schools in the past five years. The information for the presentation at this June meeting will cover *school improvement* and *outreach services*. Facilities will be discussed in a separate staff note.

School improvement

There have been ongoing efforts at both schools to improve services to our students. Information will be presented to update the KBE on the efforts to:

- improve literacy during the school day and incorporate literacy into student life (residential);
- broaden career and technical education offerings by streamlining the courses offered, adding new courses, reassigning staff to cover new courses, and working with neighboring school districts;
- generally improve student performance and test scores through one-to-one mentoring and providing staff professional development that focuses on student performance;
- continue to involve parents and families in all aspects of the students' school experience; and
- review policies and procedures at each school to update practices to ensure the best use of resources and personnel, and to make the schools safe, orderly and welcoming for students, families and staff.

Outreach services

An equally important function of both schools is to serve as a statewide resource on deafness and blindness. Information on outreach services and their impact on students and teachers across the state will be shared that highlights the following areas:

- providing technical assistance and consultation to teachers, staff, students and families across the state through the use of outreach consultants;
- performing evaluation services to students with recommendations for services;
- redesigning of the materials resource centers that provide textbooks and educational aids to students and teachers so that the process is more efficient;
- providing professional development to staff across the state;
- assisting families and parents to establish support groups across the state and providing information on educational services and options for students;
- providing on-going collaboration with the Kentucky Deaf/Blind Project to provide training, technical assistance and consultation for students with multiple sensory and disability needs;
- continuing to collaborate with private agencies to fill the wide range of needs of students with sensory loss; and
- working with institutes of higher education to address the on-going need for adequately trained teachers and staff to provide services to students with sensory loss.

Impact on Getting to Proficiency:

Traditionally, there have been significant achievement gaps in test scores and success rates of students who are deaf/hard of hearing and/or blind/visually impaired. Program modifications at KSB and KSD and expanded roles as statewide resource centers will serve to reduce the gaps and better prepare these students for successful transitions to adult life.

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